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Senate

NOMINATION OF TOMMY G. THOMPSON, OF WISCONSIN, TO BE SECRETARY OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Mr. CARPER. Mr. President, I thank the Senator for yielding and for the opportunity to speak today.

For the last 8 years, I served as Governor of Delaware and a colleague of Governor Thompson. During that period of time, my family was fortunate enough to be a guest in his home. We have eaten at his table. There were times over the last 8 years when we crossed swords--rarely. But there have been many more times when we found there was common ground and the opportunity to work together for the good of Wisconsin, Delaware, and the other 48 States.

He was chairman of the National Governors' Association for a year. He was also the chairman for our Center for Best Practices within the National Governors' Association. In those roles, I found him to be, first of all, pragmatic; secondly, I found him to be innovative.

I found Governor Thompson to be someone who is civil, who really does not just talk about bipartisanship, but he actually means it and lives it. I found in Governor Thompson someone who really tries to treat his colleagues the way he would want to be treated.

I want to pause for a moment and direct my thoughts and attention to welfare reform. Some people think it is possible to do welfare reform on the cheap and we

simply set time limits and push people off a cliff at the end of that period of time.

Governor Thompson does not approach welfare reform that way, nor do I, nor do most of our Governors.

When welfare was actually created over 60 years ago, we set up a system with the best of intentions, but a system that unwittingly turned out to encourage people to get on welfare and have children out of wedlock, have them early, and for fathers to walk away from those responsibilities and for people to be better off by staying on welfare.

What Governor Thompson has done and what Governors across the country have done is to say maybe we should change the incentives we set up over the last 60 years so people are better off when they go to work, not by staying on welfare.

For Gov. Tommy Thompson, it has meant spending more money on child care, not less.

For Gov. Tommy Thompson, it has been spending more money on health care to make sure when people leave welfare they do not also lose health care for themselves and their families.

For Gov. Tommy Thompson, it has been providing transportation so people have the opportunity to take a job and actually have a way of getting there.

For Gov. Tommy Thompson, and for the rest of us, it has meant changing our tax policies as well so people are not penalized for the first dollar they make when they go to work but actually are able to realize and keep that purchasing power they have earned.

He does not believe in welfare reform on the cheap. He has a good, realistic, tough-love approach. Sure, there is a toughness to it, but there is also real love and compassion, and I believe he will take those same qualities to his new post as Secretary if we confirm him, which I hope we will.

Another way I got to know him, believe it or not, is through Amtrak. The President historically appoints one Governor to serve on the Amtrak board.

He was on the Amtrak board before me. President Clinton appointed me to serve for 4 years, and at the end of my service, I

recommended the President appoint Governor Thompson again. Not only that, he ended up serving as the chairman of the board for Amtrak. In that capacity, he has helped to focus, spread, and expand passenger rail service, to improve the quality of that passenger rail service, to find ways to reduce Amtrak's operating budget deficit, to invest in the infrastructure of passenger rail service, and to try to be fair to not just the customers but the folks who work for Amtrak.

In closing, I am delighted to be able to stand here before you today to say this is somebody I know, somebody I have known for a long time. This is someone of whom the people of Wisconsin can be proud. This is someone I am proud to express my support for today and to encourage my colleagues to support his nomination.